


**My Fellow Americans: The Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum Internship
Portfolio**

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

Amanda Hunt

Thesis Advisor
Michael William Doyle

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "M W Doyle", is written over a horizontal line.

Ball State University
Muncie, Indiana

August 2008

Graduation: December 2008

Spring
Undergrad
Thesis
2489
24
2008
HSG

Abstract

As a history major with the public history option, an internship is required for graduation. I chose to complete this requirement at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum in Grand Rapids, Michigan because of my interest in the presidency and my desire to gain museum experience. Over the course of the summer I worked under the supervision of the museum's registrar, Jamie Draper, in the collections department. I learned how to perform museum tasks such as cataloging, preserving, cleaning, inventorying, and condition reporting of objects. I was also able to participate in fabricating and mounting an exhibit and learn that process. The full-time internship with stipend upon completion began on May 12, 2008, and ended on August 22, 2008. Throughout the internship I have kept a work-log and daily journals of my experiences. This portfolio is the compilation of those documents as well as documents and reports produced over the course of the internship, photographs from my experience, and examples of work that I did.

Acknowledgements

- I would like to thank Dr. Michael Wm. Doyle for advising me through this project. He was extremely helpful through the entire process.
- I would also like to thank Jamie Draper, the staff of the Gerald R. Ford Museum and Library, and the Gerald R. Ford Foundation for this amazing opportunity and all of their support.

Artist Statement

This internship has proven to be a valuable experience in that it provided me with an introduction into the field of special collections. During my internship I was able to perform a variety of tasks and learn from professionals in the field that I was interested in entering. Completing this portfolio provided me with a means of documenting what I was doing while I was doing it, helping me to remember it. It is also useful as a means of reflection. The portfolio is a hardcopy display of what the internship entailed and the experience I gained for me, interested readers, and most importantly future employers to examine.

An internship is required of all History majors with the Public History option at Ball State University. I decided to do a 600 hour internship, equaling 12 academic credit hours. My first task, of course, was to find an internship. To do this I looked at various professional sites, the Society of American Archivists and the American Museum Association, for example. I was still unsure if I wanted an archival or museum collections internship in the beginning, but I decided on a museum internship since I had had previous archival experience. I also took my interest in the presidency into account, as well as a preference towards places offering stipends. Location was not really an issue, although I did prefer to go away from the area to show that I was willing to do that. I applied to three sites; the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, and the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library and Museum. Before applying I emailed each institution as well, to state my interest and acquire more information.

My first email to the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library and Museum was actually to an archivist at the library. The website discussed internships, but not clearly how to apply for one. I was interested in the site because it was a federal presidential site that out of the area but still

fairly close. Since I was not sure how to apply I emailed a contact person with a brief cover letter and my résumé and was kindly directed to Jamie Draper, the registrar at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum, who oversees interns. Jamie informed me that what I had submitted was sufficient and that he would like to schedule an interview. I drove up to Grand Rapids for the first time (in the snow) and had my first professional interview, which was a great experience.

When I was informed that the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum was offering me an internship I was still waiting to hear from the two other sites where I applied. I was nervous at first about whether or not I should accept before I knew if I would be offered one of the others. After a conversation with my advisor I decided to accept the internship. Shortly after accepting the internship I was offered internships at the two other sites, but I still think I made the right decision. My internship at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum was a truly enriching experience and after months of stress everything had worked out.

The front matter of my internship portfolio contains the early paperwork from the process. This includes the formal offer from the museum, the museum's description of the internship, and internship requirements. There are also internship agreements for both the Public History Internship Program and the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum. These outline what is expected of the intern and what the intern should expect, making sure that everyone is on the same page from the beginning. The project proposal was important because I had to discuss what exactly I would be doing over the course of the summer, so again I knew what to expect. The news release was something that was not only important so that my internship could be publicized, but also so that I could practice doing one. It provides another simple outline of what I would be doing in my internship for others to see.

The portfolio began as a means to allow my advisor to keep track of my activities and progress. It doubles as an honors thesis and a portfolio for the Public History Internship Program at Ball State University. At the end of each day I would log in my hours on a spreadsheet and then sit down to write my daily learning journal. The daily learning journals are still valuable to look back on. Also writing down what I learned everyday put me in the mind set of looking for learning experiences. The guidelines of my project stipulated that each journal had to be something different so I began having to actively try to learn new things. When something new arose it would stick out to me and I would consciously remember it so I could write about it that evening. This carried over after the internship and I now find myself looking for these learning opportunities in everyday life. I believe that this is a positive activity that has helped me not only to retain more new information, but also to find little things to be just as important as larger lessons.

The beginning entries in the learning journal are basic and descriptive of what I did. However, as the semester progressed, the learning journals became more topic specific and used more vocabulary from the museum field. I also had increased contact with other staff and interns, adding to my knowledge as I learned from their experiences. Many of these entries also just contain useful information about the museum or special collections fields in general. Looking back over the learning journals I truly think they show my progress not only in understanding the museum field, but also in becoming a more confident individual. My beginning journals show my nervousness, but by the last entry I spoke of how I was prepared to enter a job in the public history field.

The next section contains my midterm and final reports. Both of these also are helpful in tracing my progress and development over the course of the internship. One of the guidelines in

writing these two reports was that I could not repeat material, so they both exhibit different experiences. They outline my activities and how the skills and knowledge that I obtained fit into my educational, career, and life goals. The reports also outline concepts that I learned in my history courses at Ball State that I found to be helpful. Additionally I discussed the impact that the internship had on my way of thinking, values, ethics, and interpersonal skills. The positive and negative aspects of the internship are also examined. Finally I wrote about what could make the internship more positive. The final report rates my overall internship experience, which required a great deal of introspection. These reports serve as good reflections for me and show others what an internship at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum might be like, as well as how the internship impacted me personally.

Near the end of my internship portfolio I have included pictures and examples of the work I completed during the internship. These provide good visuals for the viewer. The pictures feature me performing various tasks. There are also pictures that serve as work examples. One, for example, displays a hat mount that I made for the baseball exhibit. I included this not only because I was proud of it, but also because it shows that I can make a mount and that one I made has been used in an exhibit. The images of the records and condition reports I made are important for the same reason. A potential employer would find these skills desirable. An employer being able to see actual examples of records and reports I created would help to show that I do indeed know how to do it, that I have done it, and that I can do it well.

Finally my portfolio contains a bibliography. The resources included contain materials that I was asked to read upon beginning the internship by my supervisor. These were helpful for many of the daily activities, such as handling of artifacts. Other resources, such as the *The Revised Nomenclature for Museum Cataloging* and *What's What, a Visual Glossary of the*

Physical World, were books that I actually used to perform my daily activities, such as data entry and condition reporting. There are also books and articles that I consulted when I had a question about something that I learned or for the purpose of writing a journal entry. I also read Betty Ford's autobiography to better understand the Ford family, which was extremely helpful when working with collection items and understanding what they were. This list of books and articles not only records what I used, but can be helpful for others wanting to learn more about museum collections or public history.

This internship portfolio is meant to be a reflection and display of my work and growth during my 600 hour summer internship at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum. Its main purposes are for me and my advisor to trace my progress, and for employers to see the progress in a hardcopy format. As an honors thesis it also serves to aid others who may wish to follow in my path and do a similar project. The internship may seem daunting, but it has been worth every hour I put into it. Although my path ultimately led me to library school to pursue a Master of Library Science degree, my internship at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum has continued to serve me well, helping me to obtain the job that I currently have in a rare books library.

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Internship Description from the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum

The museum internship program at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum offers real world museum experience to students interested in pursuing a career within the field. The internship is restricted to upper level undergraduate and graduate students. We assign a variety of collections and exhibits related projects to our interns. Within the sphere of collections, interns work on a variety of tasks, such as data-entry, cataloging, encapsulating, cleaning, inventorying and condition reporting, geared to impart knowledge on proper collections management practices. Our interns also spend some time on exhibit related projects, such as mount-making, lighting, environmental monitoring and assisting with artifact loans. We offer advice on graduate programs and career options to help our interns grow professionally. Upon completion of the internship, the Gerald R. Ford Foundation remits a stipend to the intern.



Amanda Hunt <amandadawnhunt@gmail.com>

museum internship

3 messages

James Draper <James.Draper@nara.gov>

To: Amanda D Hunt <adhunt@bsu.edu>

Cc: mwdoyle@bsu.edu

Tue, Apr 8, 2008 at 8:06 AM

Hello Amanda,

As per my April 4th e-mail, we are happy to offer you a 2008 summer internship here at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum. It will consist of a total of 600 contact hours and be based on a schedule we shall negotiate (e.g., 40 hours per week over 15 weeks commencing Mon., 12 May and ending on Fri., 22 Aug.). I understand that you will need to expend a small percentage of these hours on academic tasks that cumulatively document your duties at the Museum, which is spelled out in the BSU intern agreement. Once you complete your internship, the Gerald R. Ford Foundation will remit to you a stipend of \$2,000.

Please find attached intern job description. You may use it if BSU should require any formal description of your upcoming internship. Let me know if any clarification is needed.

I looked over BSU's internship paperwork on their website and saw nothing that conflicts with our requirements. I am glad we are able to offer you this opportunity and I look forward to working with you this summer. Let me know if you should need anything from my end or if any questions should arise.

Thanks,
Jamie

James W. Draper
Registrar
Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum
303 Pearl Street, NW
Grand Rapids, MI 49504-5353
(616) 254-0379
James.Draper@nara.gov
<http://www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/>

Ball State University
Department of History
Public History Internship Program
Burkhardt Building 213
Muncie, IN 47306-0480

Director's Office: 765-285-8732
Departmental Office: 765-285-8700
Fax: 765-285-5612
E-mail: mwdoyle@bsu.edu
http://www.bsu.edu/web/mwdoyle/hist_300-369
[HST300.369 Intern Agreement.doc]

PUBLIC HISTORY INTERNSHIP PROGRAM AGREEMENT

The goals of the Ball State University Public History Internship Program are twofold:

1) to provide an opportunity for the student Intern to apply academic skills and knowledge while gaining practical experience at a professional worksite whose primary mission involves collecting, preserving, and/or interpreting history for the general public; 2) to provide the public history worksite with the services of a student Intern who is eager and qualified to assist it in realizing its mission during the period of the internship.

Terms

The length of the internship is a 6-week period beginning May 12, 2008 and ending August 22, 2008, coinciding with the ___ Fall ___ Spring X Summer semester, during which the Intern will work approximately 40 hours per week for his/her organization or agency. The exact schedule shall be determined by the Site Supervisor in consultation with the Intern and is subject to the approval of the Program Director. The time an intern expends in completing the academic requirements of the internship shall be also counted as part of the total number of contact hours

The Program Director and the Intern will be in contact during the semester on an as-needed basis. Prior to the formal start of the internship, the Intern and the Site Supervisor shall meet to draw up a formal position description which sets forth the worksite's expectations and requirements regarding the term and conditions of the Intern's assigned duties. This position description will be reviewed by the Program Director to ensure that it is both professionally appropriate and proportionate to the number of academic credits for which the student has registered in the internship course History 300 or History 369. (Indicate here the applicable level: ___ 3 credit hours = 150 contact hours of internship work during the semester; ___ 6 credit hours = 300 contact hours; X 9 credit hours = 450 contact hours; ___ 12 credit hours = contact 600 hours.) Only when the position description has been approved by the Program Director, and this Internship Program Agreement form has been signed by all three parties, may the internship officially commence. * History 499 for 3 credits + hours = 150 contact hours

Internship Site Supervisor's Responsibilities

The agency or organization is expected to provide opportunities for the Intern to become acquainted with or involved in activities related to its overall management and operations. Typically these might include participating in behind-the-scene tours of its facilities, attending staff meetings and training workshops, and speaking with staff members regarding their responsibilities. In exchange, the Intern is expected to provide beneficial assistance to the site through her/his work on service-related, technical, and problem-solving activities. During the final week of the internship, a brief evaluation form (supplied by the Program Director through the website above) shall be completed by the Site Supervisor assessing the overall quality of the Intern's work for the organization or agency.

Intern's Academic Requirements

The Intern shall keep a daily Work-log and Reflective Journal over the course of the semester. These must be submitted to the Program Director in two parts: part one, covering the first half of the internship term, is due by the end of week 8 during the Fall or Spring semester, or week 5 during the Summer semester, along with a typed, five-page, double-spaced Midterm Report assessing his/her internship experience to that date; part two, covering the second half of the term, is due by the last day of instruction in the semester.

Accompanying part two will be a typed, eight-page, double-spaced Final Report by the Intern addressing the entire semester's learning experience, along with a Portfolio illustrative of the Intern's work assignment, the specifics of which must be approved by both the Site Supervisor and the Program Director by no later than the end of week 5 during the Fall or Spring semester, or week 3 during the Summer semester. All of these items will be critiqued by the Program Director and, together with the written evaluation of the Intern's work by the Site Supervisor, will be used by the Program Director in determining the Intern's final grade for the course.

The Program Director reserves the right to terminate or abridge this Agreement at the written request of the University, the Agency or Organization, or the Intern.

I understand and will comply with the terms of the Public History Internship Program, as administered by the Ball State University Department of History.

James W. Draper
Internship Site Supervisor's Name

Registrar
Site Supervisor's Title

James W. Draper
Site Supervisor's Signature

5-12-08
Date Signed

Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum
Internship Site's Name

Internship Site's Mailing Address

Amanda Hunt
Intern's Name

Amanda Hunt
Intern's Signature

APR 29 2008
Date Signed

Michael Wm. Doyle
Public History Internship Program Director
Dr. Michael Wm. Doyle's Signature

APR 29 2008
Date Signed



Library: 1000 Beal Ave., Ann Arbor, MI 48109
Museum: 303 Pearl Street, NW, Grand Rapids, MI 49504

(734) 205-0555 fax (734) 205-0571
(616) 254-0400 fax (616) 254-0386

Internship Agreement

Amanda D. Hunt
810 Ritterskamp
Vincennes, Indiana 47591
(812) 886-5067
309-98-6761

Supervisor: James W. Draper, Registrar

Intern Advisor: Dr. Michael Doyle
University: Ball State University

The student's internship will consist of 600 hours, completed with the regular work week (Monday through Friday; 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM) unless otherwise approved by the intern's supervisor. Following the successful conclusion of the internship, the Gerald R. Ford Foundation will remit to the intern a stipend of \$2,000.

Internship Dates: May 12 – August 22, 2008

Work Schedule: Monday – Friday, 8:00 am – 4:30 pm

INTERNSHIP OBJECTIVES

Student

- To gain an overall understanding of how the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum functions.
- To develop a greater knowledge of Gerald R. Ford and the American Presidency.
- To experience and participate in a history-focused, professional work environment.
- To gain an in-depth understanding of the particular work assigned to the intern.
- To make a meaningful contribution to the working goals and overall vision of the museum.

Museum

- To gain useful and meaningful results from the intern.
- To impart to other aspiring historians an awareness of the museum and its functions.
- To gain fresh insight from interns to help improve our institution.

THE INTERN AGREES TO:

1. Conduct himself or herself as a professional.
2. Prepare conscientiously and thoroughly for each task related to the internship.
3. View the museum's introductory film and exhibits.
4. Promptly contact the internship supervisor should schedule conflicts or illnesses intrude.
5. Use time wisely and not interfere with the work of others.
6. Dress appropriately, understanding that some work may require more formal dress.
7. Treat with respect the museum's staff, visitors, researchers, and visiting dignitaries.
8. Offer and receive constructive criticism.
9. Provide supervisor with a one page monthly report at the end of each month.
10. Keep time sheet updated.
11. Provide the internship supervisor with any written assignment required by a university.
12. Work on the following specific assignments:
 - Help organize, photograph, and catalog artifact donations.
 - Complete full catalog records in the IO Database for artifacts in permanent collection.
 - Reorganize map case storage units with some encapsulation work.
 - Assist with temporary exhibit rotations.

THE MUSEUM AGREES TO:

1. Consider the intern as an integral part of the museum.
2. Provide guidance and counsel to help the intern grow professionally.
3. Give clear instructions regarding assignments, work to be completed, and the manner in which it is to be completed.
4. Provide feedback to the intern through periodic evaluations.
5. Respond in a timely manner to the intern's work-related needs.
6. Complete in a timely manner any forms required by the intern's academic advisor or intern coordinator.
7. Provide intern with selected readings related to museum work.

THIS AGREEMENT AND THE INTERNSHIP MAY BE TERMINATED FOR THE FOLLOWING REASONS:

1. Any conduct by the intern deemed inappropriate in a professional workplace.
2. Any prolonged absence that would be detrimental to the intern experience.
3. Any action by the museum that is detrimental to the student.

THE INTERN SHOULD BE AWARE THAT:

The position of collections management intern is a position of trust. You will be assigned responsibilities for working with the museum's objects. While supervision will be provided, direct supervision is not always possible. Therefore it is important you understand some basic museum practices.

- Museum objects are assigned unique numbers. Those numbers correspond to the objects' entries in the IO database and records kept in the registrar's office. In those records can be found information regarding donor, condition, location, description, and exhibitions.
- Each object should be handled as if it is the most important object in the museum. Specifics on how to handle artifacts will be addressed in the assigned readings and in orientation.
- If an object is damaged, regardless of how it was damaged, this should be brought to the attention of the registrar. Do not attempt to repair a damaged object.
- The main door from the registrar's office into collections storage should remain open when you are working in collections. Otherwise, it and the other doors into collections should be shut and the lights turned off. Unless another authorized person is working in the collections, never leave the registrar's office without first closing the door to collections storage.
- No object from the museum's collection shall be removed from collections storage by anyone without explicit permission from the museum's registrar, curator, or deputy director.
- No food or drink is permitted in collections storage or around artifacts.
- When taking notes around artifacts, use only a pencil, not an ink pen.
- When in doubt about anything regarding collections, ask the curator or registrar.

SIGNATURES:

Intern: Amanda F. Hunt Date: 5/12/08

Intern Supervisor: James H. Dyer Date: 5-12-08

Dr. Michael Wm. Doyle
Ball State University
Department of History
Burkhardt Bldg 213
Muncie, IN 47306-0480

Office Phone: 765-285-8732
E-mail: mwdoyle@bsu.edu
Fax: 765-285-5612
Webpage: http://www.bsu.edu/web/mwdoyle/hist_300-369/index.htm

HIST. 300/369: PUBLIC HISTORY INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

Intern's Name: Michael Doyle Semester: Fall ____ Spring ____ Summer ✓ 2008

Placement Site & Location:

Course No. & Sec: *Hist 300* ____ : 001 ____ 002 ____ 003 ____ 004 ____ ; *Hist 369* ____ : 001 ____
002 ____ 003 ✓ 004 ____ *History 499 (to credit history)*

Deadlines for Submission of Written Work

[Note: These deadlines are the dates by which materials that are due must be in the hands of the Program Director. For items that can't be faxed or emailed, the Intern should post them 3-5 business days (i.e., not counting the weekend, since there is no campus delivery then) in advance of the deadline when using 1st-class USPS Mail.]

Internship Formal Offer and Position Description [due prior to start of internship]:

Complete
Intern Agreement Form [3 copies of signed form due prior to start of internship]:

Due 2/24
Portfolio Project Proposal and Internship News Release [due at 1/5th point in internship term]:

May 30
Part 1: Work-log, Reflective Journal, Midterm Report [due at half-way point of internship term]:

July 2
Part 2: Work-log, Reflective Journal, Final Report [due one week prior to end of internship term]:

August 15
Portfolio: Finished Draft [due one week prior to end of internship term]:

August 15
Final Drafts of Portfolio; Parts 1 & 2 of Work-log and Reflective Journal; and Final Report Draft [due one week after return of critiqued finished draft]:

Intern Performance Evaluation Form [to be completed by Site Supervisor and submitted by final day of internship term]:

Comments:

Amanda Hunt
History 369
Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum
Internship Project Proposal
May 30, 2008

Over the course of the summer my large project will consist of reorganizing the four map cases consisting of approximately 1,700 items. This involves going through each drawer, checking the items off the inventory list, and deciding where they belong. Items are sorted into categories including awards, campaign posters, signs and posters, maps, portraits, political cartoons, artwork, photographs, and a miscellaneous category which can be split up later once it is seen what it includes. The drawers will then be arranged by these categories. This will make it easier to find things and will simply make more sense than having several random materials in one drawer. It is also better to not mix newspaper and photographs since they have different needs. A smaller project that goes along with this is to encapsulate the items in the drawers. Eventually the museum would like for all items to be encapsulated, but for now I am just doing what I can, mainly for items that are fragile and can benefit from being encapsulated. This also gives me something to do when I need a break from sorting. Each day I will try to do at least some encapsulating. Along with that I also have data entry of plaques, certificates, and other items to work on as a small project. Additional side projects, such as helping with taking down the temporary exhibit and putting up a new one, cleaning exhibits, and helping with inventories will also be part of my duties.

Internship News Release

University Communications
AC Building, Room 224
Ball State University
Muncie IN 47306
Office: (765)285-1560
Fax: (765)285-5442
E-mail: <ucomm@bsu.edu>
Internet: www.bsu.edu/web/news/aboutur/

Dr. Michael Wm. Doyle, Director
Public History Internship Program
Burkhardt Building 213
Ball State University
Muncie, IN 47306-0480
Office: (765) 285-8732
Fax: (765) 285-5612
E-mail: <mwdoyle@bsu.edu>

Please return this form to the Public History Internship Program Director by no later than the end of the third week of your internship. He will then forward the form to University Communications.

Please print clearly or type.

Reason for News Release:

To announce a BSU undergraduate History major's internship placement (see over).

Name and phone number of person who can answer questions regarding this information:

[See above, top right]

Name: Amanda D. Hunt
First Middle Initial Last

Home State: Indiana Home County: Knox

Hometown Address:

810 Ritterskamp Vincennes 47591
Street City Zip

Local (i.e., Ball State) Address and Phone Number (or Other Residence during Internship):

5 Lyon NW, Apt. 406 Grand Rapids MI 49503 (812) 887-2888
Street City State Zip Phone

☐ Freshman ☐ Sophomore ☐ Junior ☒ Senior ☐ Graduate Student

Major(s): History, Option 2: Public History Internship and History, Option 3: Pre-Graduate History

Minor(s): French

☐ Male

☒ Female

Student Identification Number: 000-66-6620

Father/Guardian's Name: Bob Hunt

Address: 3857 N. Lime Crusher Rd City: Edwardsport State: IN Zip: 47528

Mother/Guardian's Name: Lou Anne Hunt

Address: 810 Ritterskamp City: Vincennes State: IN Zip: 47591

I give permission for a news story to be released to my hometown newspaper.

Student Signature: Amanda F. Hunt Date: 5/29/08

Name(s) of Hometown Newspaper(s): Vincennes Sun-Commercial

In a paragraph or two below, present a detailed account about your internship placement, including the exact name and location of the institution or agency, the name and title of your site supervisor, your starting and completion dates, whether your position is part-time or full-time, and the range of duties in which you are already or will eventually be involved:

[See Attached]

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Contact:

Amanda Hunt
Intern, Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum
(812) 887-2888
amandadawnhunt@gmail.com

Ball State History Major Interning at Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum

Grand Rapids, MI, May 29, 2008 — Amanda Hunt is working as a full time intern in the collections at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum this summer. The museum is part of the National Archives Presidential Library system and his located at 303 Pearl Street NW, Grand Rapids, MI, 49504. She will be working under the museum registrar, James Draper. Although the internship is mainly focused on collections, it will also include some exhibit work. Her main task will be reorganizing 1,700 of the museums 16,000 artifacts. The internship began on May 12, 2008, and will continue until the end of August. Amanda Hunt is currently a senior at Ball State University and plans to graduate in December.

Amanda Hunt
 History 369-003/ Honors 499-003
 Summer 2008
 Work-log
 Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum

Orientation

Tuesday, April 29, 2008	1:00 PM-3:30 PM		2.5	hours
		Week Total	2.5	hours

Week 1

Monday, May 12, 2008	8:45 AM-3:00 PM		6.25	hours
Tuesday, May 13, 2008	7:45 AM-4:15 PM		8.5	hours
Wednesday, May 14, 2008	8:00 AM-4:00 PM	6:45 PM-10:00 PM	11.25	hours
Thursday, May 15, 2008	8:00 AM-4:00 PM		8	hours
Friday, May 16, 2008	8:00 AM-4:15 PM		8.25	hours
Home Hours			1	hour
		Week Total	43.25	hours
		Cumulative Total	45.75	hours

Week 2

Monday, May 19 2008	8:00 AM-4:00 PM		8	hours
Tuesday, May 20, 2008	8:00 AM-4:00 PM		8	hours
Wednesday, May 21, 2008	8:00 AM-4:00 PM		8	hours
Thursday, May 22, 2008	8:00 AM-4:00 PM	7:00 PM-9:00 PM	10	hours
Friday, May 23, 2008	8:00 AM-3:00 PM		7	hours
Home Hours			0.5	hour
		Week Total	41.5	hours
		Cumulative Total	87.25	hours

Week 3

Tuesday, May 27, 2008	8:00 AM-4:30 PM		8.5	hours
Wednesday, May 28, 2008	8:00 AM-4:30 PM		8.5	hours
Thursday, May 29, 2008	8:00 AM-4:00 PM		8	hours
Friday, May 30, 2008	8:00 AM-8:15 AM		0.25	hours
Home Hours			1.25	hours
		Week Total	26.5	hours
		Cumulative Total	113.75	hours

Week 4

Monday, June 2, 2008	8:00 AM-4:30 PM	8.5	hours
Tuesday, June 3, 2008	8:00 AM-4:30 PM	8.5	hours
Wednesday, June 4, 2008	8:00 AM-4:30 PM	8.5	hours
Thursday, June 5, 2008	8:00 AM-4:30 PM	8.5	hours
Friday, June 6, 2008	8:00 AM-4:00 PM	8	hours
Home Hours		1.25	hours
Week Total		43.25	hours
Cumulative Total		157	hours

Week 5

Monday, June 9, 2008	8:00 AM-4:15 PM	8.25	hours
Tuesday, June 10, 2008	8:00 AM-4:30 PM	8.5	hours
Wednesday, June 11, 2008	8:00 AM-4:15 PM	8.25	hours
Thursday, June 12, 2008	8:00 AM-4:30 PM	8.5	hours
Friday, June 13, 2008	8:00 AM-4:00 PM	8	hours
Home Hours		0.5	hour
Week Total		42	hours
Cumulative Total		199	hours

Week 6

Monday, June 16, 2008	8:00 AM-4:30 PM	8.5	hours
Tuesday, June 17, 2008	8:00 AM-4:00 PM	8	hours
Wednesday, June 18, 2008	8:00 AM-3:30 PM	7.5	hours
Thursday, June 19, 2008	8:00 AM-4:30 PM	8.5	hours
Friday, June 20, 2008	8:00 AM-3:30 PM	7.5	hours
Home Hours		1.5	hours
Week Total		41.5	hours
Cumulative Total		240.5	hours

Week 7

Monday, June 23, 2008	8:00 AM-4:00 PM	8	hours
Tuesday, June 24, 2008	8:00 AM-4:00 PM	8	hours
Wednesday, June 25, 2008	8:00 AM-4:00 PM 7:15 PM-9:15 PM	10	hours
Thursday, June 26, 2008	8:00 AM-4:00 PM	8	hours
Friday, June 27, 2008	8:00 AM-4:00 PM	8	hours
Home Hours		2.5	hours
Week Total		44.5	hours
Cumulative Total		285	hours

Week 8

Monday, June 30, 2008	8:00 AM-4:30 PM	8.5	hours
Tuesday, July 1, 2008	8:00 AM-4:30 PM	8.5	hours
Wednesday, July 2, 2008	8:00 AM-4:00 PM	8	hours
Thursday, July 3, 2008	8:00 AM-4:00 PM	8	hours
Home Hours		0.5	hour
Week Total		33.5	hours
Cumulative Total		318.5	hours

Week 9

Tuesday, July 8, 2008	8:00 AM-4:30 PM	8.5	hours
Wednesday, July 9, 2008	8:00 AM-4:30 PM	8.5	hours
Thursday, July 10, 2008	8:00 AM-4:30 PM	8.5	hours
Friday, July 11, 2008	8:00 AM-4:30 PM	8.5	hours
Home Hours		0.5	hours
Week Total		34.5	hours
Cumulative Total		353	hours

Week 10

Sunday, July 13, 2008	7:00 PM-10:00 PM	3	hours
Monday, July 14, 2008	8:00 AM-4:30 PM	8.5	hours
Tuesday, July 15, 2008	8:00 AM-4:15 PM	8.25	hours
Wednesday, July 16, 2008	8:00 AM-4:30 PM	8.5	hours
Thursday, July 17, 2008	8:00 AM-4:15 PM	8.25	hours
Friday, July 18, 2008	8:00 AM-4:00 PM	8	hours
Home Hours		0.5	hour
Week Total		45	hours
Cumulative Total		398	hours

Week 11

Monday, July 21, 2008	9:00 AM-4:30 PM	7.5	hours
Tuesday, July 22, 2008	8:00 AM-4:30 PM	8.5	hours
Wednesday, July 23, 2008	8:00 AM-4:30 PM	8.5	hours
Thursday, July 24, 2008	8:00 AM-4:00 PM	8	hours
Friday, July 25, 2008	8:00 AM-4:30 PM	8.5	hours
Home Hours		3	hours
Week Total		44	hours
Cumulative Total		442	hours

Week 12

Monday, July 28, 2008	8:00 AM-4:00 PM	8	hours
Tuesday, July 29,	8:00 AM-4:00 PM	8	hours

2008			
Wednesday, July 30, 2008	8:00 AM-4:30 PM	8.5	hours
Thursday, July 31, 2008	8:15 AM-4:00 PM	7.75	hours
Friday, August 1, 2008	7:45 AM-4:00 PM	8.25	hours
Home Hours		2.5	hours
	Week Total	43	hours
	Cumulative Total	485	hours

Week 13			
Monday, August 4, 2008	7:45 AM-4:15 PM	8.5	hours
Tuesday, August 5, 2008	8:00 AM-4:00 PM	8	hours
Wednesday, August 6, 2008	8:00 AM-4:00 PM	8	hours
Thursday, August 7, 2008	8:00 AM-3:30 PM 7:00 PM-9:45 PM	10.25	hours
Friday, August 8, 2008	8:00 AM-3:45 PM	7.75	hours
Home Hours		5	hours
	Week Total	55.5	hours
	Cumulative Total	540.5	hours

Week 14			
Monday, August 11, 2008	8:00 AM-4:00 PM	8	hours
Tuesday, August 12, 2008	8:00 AM-4:00 PM	8	hours
Wednesday, August 13, 2008	8:00 AM-3:15 PM	7.25	hours
Thursday, August 14, 2008	8:00 AM-3:00 PM	7	hours
Friday, August 15, 2008	8:00 AM-3:30 PM	7.5	hours
Home Hours		0.5	hour
	Week Total	38.25	hours
	Cumulative Total	578.75	hours

Week 15			
Monday, August 18, 2008	8:15 AM-3:45 PM	7.5	hours
Tuesday, August 19, 2008	8:00 AM-4:00 PM	8	hours
Wednesday, August 20, 2008	8:00 AM-2:00 PM	6	hours
Home Hours		0.25	hour
	Week Total	21.75	hours
	Cumulative Total	600.5	hours

Amanda Hunt
History 369-003/ Honors 499-003
Summer 2008
Reflective Journal
Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum

Tuesday, April 29, 2008

Today I learned a great deal about what will be required of me this summer. I now feel better prepared to undertake this internship. The most important thing that I learned was what all is required for my final portfolio. I also learned what is expected from me in my Reflective Journals and Work-log and how to put those together. I am glad to know what is expected from me; this helps to alleviate some anxiety. I am also glad to know that I can turn to Dr. Doyle if I need an advocate or safety net over the course of this internship. However, I do feel confident that I am prepared for this experience and that it will be a good one.

Monday, May 12, 2008

Today was my first day at The Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum. The day mainly consisted of doing paper work and learning my way around. I was introduced to the staff members who were all very nice. After introductions there was an impromptu budget meeting in the hallway that I got to witness. They joked with me and the other intern that that is how business is conducted. Then I got a detailed tour of the exhibits and collections, which highlighted some of the things that I may be working on out there. This tour included the map cases; it may be my big project to reorganize those and to encapsulate some of the items. I was then informed of other projects such as taking down a temporary exhibit, helping put up a new permanent exhibit, and cleaning the Oval Office exhibit.

Mr. Jamie Draper, the museum's registrar and my supervisor, also went over the accessioning process. He showed me the numbers on the files and then on the objects themselves. It was interesting to see the trinomial cataloguing system, which I learned about in my museum class (Anthropology 377) last semester, in use. The database that they use, "io" was then introduced to me. This is apparently a standard program among U.S. Presidential Museums, which I was unaware of. The program seemed simple, but it will take practice to get it right. We will be practicing with that the next few days to allow me to become familiar with the program and the collection. Additionally, this will be a smaller project for me to work on since many of the artifacts do not have complete records.

Today was mostly an orientation day, so I apologize if this seems like too much of a recap. I have a lot to take in and there is going to be a lot to learn, but I am looking forward to learning more about how museums run in general. I think that I will learn a lot about collections management in general as well as how NARA policies affect how collections and museums of this kind are managed. I am sure that tomorrow will only get better because I will go in already knowing my way around (at least somewhat).

Tuesday, May 13, 2008

I spent today working with entering information into the database again. It was interesting because each type of item requires different thought. This is something that is a bit different than the archives. Although you do have different kind of documents (correspondence, publications, etc.), that is much less of a difference than having plaques, framed certificates and photographs, and artwork, all which have different categories and objects names and descriptions. I enjoy the variety of objects that I get to work with.

The most important thing that I learned today was the importance of being diligent and following the rules as a registrar or collections manager. Many of the accession records that I have to work with were done by a former registrar and many of them are inconsistent and do not follow appropriate standards. This can sometimes make it difficult to navigate through his notes and the collection. Today I actually found an object that would have been from his time period with two different numbers on it, something that Jamie said is one of the worst things that can be done when cataloguing. I had to track down which number it actually was and then the incorrect number was removed. It makes it much easier on those working with the collection after you if you are thorough and do a good job, and that should really be one of the main goals of a good public historian.

On a side note, I've been learning a lot about the paperwork and such that federal employees have to go through. So far I've had two background checks and have been finger printed. At first I thought it seemed excessive, but I'm glad to know that the federal government is serious about the collections that it oversees and makes sure that trusted people are working with them.

Wednesday, May 14, 2008

Today I further discovered what a close network the Presidential Museums are. This was exhibited to me on two occasions. The first was when Jamie was talking to me about how he would like to apply at the new George W. Bush Library. Apparently one of the best jobs you can get, according to him, is at a new Presidential Museum. This was based on the fact you get to work with a living president from the beginning in setting everything up. The transition from the one Republican president to another made sense to me, though. Then I learned that party does

not seem to matter, as the second example of this closeness exhibited. The assistant director, basically director of the museum, who I got to meet, was formerly the curator at the Jimmy Carter Presidential Museum. I found this to be quite interesting. Although Jimmy Carter and Gerald Ford did get along later in life, they were of different parties. From what I have experienced so far though, the collections do seem to be more about the office rather than the party. The experience with knowing how to handle objects surrounding the presidency is more important than party affiliation.

Another thing that was demonstrated to me was the level of knowledge regarding the subject of the museum that is needed and must be attained. A simple example of this is knowing whether items are Congressional, Vice-presidential, Presidential, or post-Presidential based on the date. Committing the time frame for those periods to memory makes it much quicker to categorize items. Another funny example of this would be when I was looking at a picture of Gerald Ford taking the oath of office. Jamie came up behind me and said, "Oh, it's his Vice-Presidential oath of office. Betty is wearing the orange." This took me by surprise, but because he knew what Betty Ford was wearing at the two different oaths, he was able to quickly pinpoint which one it was while I was still looking for a date. It is also important because visitors want to know some interesting things. I've heard a lot of questions such as "What's Betty Ford's dress size" and "Who is that golfer in the background of this picture."

This evening I went to an event at the museum. The speaker was Ford's personal photographer, David Kennerly, who recently wrote a book and has an exhibit at the museum currently. I went along with Jamie to help the curator make preparations during the day and then came back for the event this evening. It was amazing to see the museum transformed into an event area. It was quite the occasion and all of the staff were mingling with and talking to

museum members, trustees, and other community members. This demonstrates that museum work does not just consist of sitting in the collections with the objects. It involves going out and networking, even for the collections staff. It is important to bring people in to draw attention to the museum, as well as to open the doors to the community to see someone unique.

Thursday, May 15, 2008

I was reminded today just how difficult it is to classify some items. I've been going through these boxes and entering the data into the database. For the category and object name I use the 1988 edition of *The Revised Nomenclature for Museum Cataloguing* to find the appropriate terms. This book is supposed to have everything that you can think of, but that is impossible. I had some interesting items today. These are various materials, mostly plaques and certificates, which were given to Gerald and Betty Ford. Most of them can be defined as either a plaque or a certificate, but a few of them today were kind of sketchy. I cannot remember right now what the exact object was, but it was not quite a plaque or certificate so I decided to try to find a better fit. The common name that was already entered was actually "wall hanging," so I looked that term up in the *Nomenclature*. That entry unfortunately did not exist, but in the process I found that someone had previously penciled in "wall, fragment" which caught my eye. I knew that things had been added when there weren't quite the correct terms because there are always unique items. Apparently the museum has fragments of various walls ranging from the original White House burned in 1812 to Betty Ford's childhood home. When someone previously tried to catalog these items there was no fit so adjustments had to be made. The same thing had to be done for "hammer, ceremonial" because who would think that you'd need that? In my case I eventually had to simply define it as a plaque and give it a really good, detailed

description. The term fit and the description would allow someone to identify it. Changes cannot be made for everything and sometimes you just have to be creative. Creative thinking and brainstorming can help and then you just have to look up terms until you get a close fit. The *Nomenclature*, however, is not perfect and adjustments are sometimes made. Collections aren't simple, it does take creative thinking.

Friday, May 16, 2008

Don, the curator, got a letter from a headhunter today soliciting his interest in a job at another museum. He wasn't interested, so he gave the letter to Jamie to show to Eric and me to get an idea of job qualifications that are looked for in the museum field. First of all, I did not know that such people existed, but apparently bigger museum have contracts with these companies to find them people for their higher level positions. This makes me think more of how corporations might operate, not a museum. Most of the job qualifications were what one would expect: organized, detail orientated, interested in the area of history, but the one that really caught our eye was that they wanted someone able to "thrive in an environment of ambiguity and complexity." We joked about this, but there definitely is an element of that as I've alluded to before. However, I do think that a museum should strive to limit these and not advertise them in a job description. Jamie pointed out that this particular museum has a very large collection so it is complex, but that perhaps more could be done there. I don't think Jamie blamed Don for wanting to pass on the job.

Another element of the letter that I noticed was the educational requirements. They mentioned background in history, so I asked Jamie if this was a common degree in graduate school for people going into museum work. He basically told me that museum studies would

commonly be more desirable for general museum work. I had been told by one of the archivists at Bracken Library that I should still get my MLS and just add a museum studies certificate if I decide to go into museum work. Thinking that that may have been bias, I asked Jamie what he thought. His bias would perhaps be the other way, but he basically stated that he's known people from museum studies, library science, and history Master's degree programs to apply for jobs and unless they have the experience the history candidates would be last on the list to get the job. His reasoning was that the importance for museums was that employees know how to do the work involved not that they know "theories." That made sense, but honestly I'm still unsure about what exactly I want to do in graduate school. Museum work is fun, but something in the back of my mind (and the archivists I work with) tells me I'll have more opportunities with a MLS. Regardless, I think both sides are deterring me away from just a Master's degree in history. I bet if I asked someone on the academic side I'd get yet another response, though.

Monday, May 19, 2008

I think I finally got the knack of encapsulating at the museum today. I just started learning on Friday, but I figured that I would pick it up quicker. I had encapsulated hundreds of issues from the *Post-Democrat* at the archives at Bracken. After that project any more encapsulating that needed to be done got pushed my way. I felt like I was pretty good at it. But it was a whole new thing learning it at the Gerald Ford Museum. It wasn't until the end of today that I was starting to feel comfortable, and I'm still not perfect. This just goes to show that although different places may have similar tasks, they are not the same. The main difference is the process. The difference in the processes used is because of different needs and different resources. At Bracken we precut sheets of Mylar all to the same size, because we just needed one size. Then took two sheets for each paper and sealed it all together with double-stick tape.

However, the federal money at the Gerald Ford Museum allows for a wonderful machine that seals the edges by melting them together. I love this machine. I feel like I'm getting spoiled by using it, however. Since this machine exists and there are a variety of materials to encapsulate, sheets are cut one at a time. Next they are folded over making a crease for one edge, and then two others are sealed. Since they are being put into a machine, though, the edges have to be close to perfect, this is where the problem came. When you are taping, as long as the edges are close, it does not matter. It takes a lot of patience trying to get the edges right. So, basically what I learned today is that just because you think you know how to do something, you still have to relearn various aspects of it to meet the needs of different institutions.

Tuesday, May 20, 2008

I've been told several times that damage to materials often occurs because of poor handling. Today I encountered two examples of this. Plaques given to the President are stored in your basic, acid-free Hollinger boxes. However, when a few of these plaques are together in one box sitting in storage and then are moved around there is a chance of these fragile pieces of breaking. This was the case when two different plaques were found with the metal presentation plates loose in the boxes. According to records these were not broken before, so something had to have happened while they were in storage. It makes me wonder if there would be a better way to store the plaques, but with so many plaques, you just have to do the best you can. Honestly, most of these plaques won't ever be on display and will just sit in storage. There just isn't the space to set them on their own shelves or in their own boxes. The best solution that I can think of without too much inconvenience would be to give extra care to the most significant and try to be more careful with all of the other plaques. The good news is that both plaques were able to be

fixed by Jamie and have been returned to the shelf. The best thing to do is to let the professional handle it, which is what Eric and I did. Hopefully, care can be taken in handling the boxes and individual plaques in the future to try to prevent any more breaking.

Wednesday, May 21, 2008

There were two naturalization ceremonies at the museum today. I got to watch one of them, which was a great experience. Really, I think that a Presidential museum is a great place to become a citizen and the symbolism was definitely there. Apparently these usually occur in Detroit, but every once in awhile they will have them in Grand Rapids at the museum. I think that it is great that the museum is able to host such occasions. Not only for these kinds of occasion, though, but for anybody who needs the space. The museum has a large auditorium and a lobby that can accommodate a large number of people. It is nice that the community and state can have access to the facility. The downside, I suppose, would be that these sorts of activities that take place during regular museum hours limit visitor access to certain parts of the museum. In this case it would have just been the auditorium, where the introductory video is shown. However, guests visiting during that hour could not view the video. I am sure that it probably added to there being more cars in the parking lot as well. On the plus side for the museum, though, it did bring people in and some of them probably ended up looking around at the exhibits. Museums cannot be convenient for all guests at all times, I guess. Sometimes exhibits have to close for cleaning or pieces are on loan. It's the same way with events held during museum hours. They are good for the museum and good for the community, so the museum should allow them, but at the same time try to limit inconvenience to guests. Instead of closing

the entire museum down for an event, they might only use the auditorium or another separate room that might not be open to the public anyway.

Thursday, May 22, 2008

I began a new project today which will probably be my big project. I'm reorganizing the four map cases, which is quite the task, but it should be neat. Currently things are just stored in drawers with no real order. Jamie set up spots at the work stations with various categories. Everything does currently have a location where it is supposed to be, even if it does not make sense. My job will be to find new locations for things. All of the newspapers will be put together and all of the campaign posters, etc. Since everything is currently recorded in the database as being in certain drawers I have also been checking the items off a list while I sort, doing an inventory. This is the second inventory that I've worked on now. When I first started on the other inventory I worked on at the Bracken archives I didn't really appreciate it. Then as I began to wrap it up I appreciated it because I knew where things were and could help others to know where they were, too. It is good to actually have routine inventories to make sure things are still in place because a lost item is no better than a stolen item. It would appear that the museum does perform spot-check inventories whenever they get a chance. This project could have just as easily been pulling things out of drawers and sorting them. By integrating an inventory into the process it demonstrates the importance of performing these. I've also found that I appreciate it more this time because I realize how important it is, although it took awhile to sink in.

Friday, May 23, 2008

This morning Jamie told me about how pieces of wreckage from Pearl Harbor are beginning to be passed to various museums. He was explaining to me how a piece would be beneficial to the museum. Ford is a veteran of WWII and was motivated to join after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. This would be a nice addition to the WWII section of the exhibit, which could use expanding. Jamie then went on to tell me how he would like to have the entire exhibit redone. His reasoning was that it was fine ten years ago, but the technology and everything just needed an update. A guest actually recently referred to the exhibit as stodgy, which is a sentiment that most of the staff agreed with. Jamie referenced the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum in Springfield, Illinois, as a good example of what he'd like. It sounds like they are all about the "visitor experience" there, and some of the things seemed reminiscent of things discussed in *Mickey Mouse History*. Jamie even said that there were some "imagineers" who worked on the project. This seems to be where museums are going, though, and if history people want to stay relevant then I think they have to be involved in the design process. I also think that updates can be made without making it into Disney "edutainment." One idea that Jamie said he'd like to bring from the Lincoln Museum is to have a holographic President Ford showing visitors around the Oval Office replica. This seemed a bit creepy to me at first, but I do think that it would interest people and still be able to give them accurate information. I don't see a problem with entertaining people as long as there is relevant, factual information being passed on. It's a fine line, however. Changes like this were not done earlier because President and Mrs. Ford didn't like the idea. I thought that this still might be the issue since the Fords had previously been behind the design and layout, but Jamie said that the problem was money. I never knew how expensive exhibits were to design. He said that it would take five to fifteen million dollars to do what the staff wanted. For now they have to settle for redoing one gallery.

It is amazing to me how important it is to stay current in the field of history. I guess I grew up with the mindset that a museum sets things out and that was it, but museums always have to reinvent themselves. New technology brings new opportunities to museums that many are now jumping on to upgrade the experience of visitors.

Tuesday, May 27, 2008

NARA has mandated that high value collection items should be gone through and checked to see if they need conservation work, so I helped Jamie with that for a little while today. Most of the items weren't necessarily things that would be important to the President and probably won't be put on display. The reason that they are high value is because they are made of precious metals and are actually worth a lot monetarily. What we were looking for was whether the items were starting to corrode or tarnish. If so, Jamie recorded if a conservator should simply look at the item, if it needed stabilization, or if it needed serious work. These were calls that only Jamie could make since most of the time it was pretty subjective. Most of these items have been under museum possession for most of their existence. They have been in proper storage with climate control and have not been handled improperly. Despite all these precautions nothing could stop the silver and other metals from corroding and tarnishing. Even one silver cup which had been kept in a special bag meant to prevent it from tarnishing still had some damage. I asked Jamie if that's just inevitable and he said yes. There isn't anything that we can do besides try to prevent it and stabilize materials. After that you just have to do what you can. Sadly, metals will corrode and tarnish despite our best efforts. The same goes for paper and other materials. Eventually they will no longer exist, or at least not remain in good condition. That was my realization of the day.

Wednesday, May 28, 2008

I got a lesson in how it's good to be at least a little mechanically inclined when working in collections. The polyester sealing machine (a.k.a the machine that encapsulates) broke down. I immediately went and told Jamie that something was wrong and he came over with his screwdriver and opened it up. It was an easy fix and he was able to change out the damaged part and get the machine up and running again. I was able to quickly get back to work and everything went along as it should. Had he not been able to fix it and we would have had to wait for someone else to come in and there would have been wasted time on that project. It also saved us from having to pay someone from the outside since it was such an easy fix. It is important to know the machinery that you work with and how to fix small problems. It saves both time and money in the long run.

Thursday, May 29, 2008

I was told on my first day by the assistant director that museums are more fun than archives. Despite that being a generalization, I do think that working at this museum is fun. The main reason for this I think is the people. Everyone is nice and works well together. Almost any time I go to the break room there is a group of people talking about anything from fertilizer to traffic. These groups include staff, even the assistant director, security, and maintenance people. I have not witnessed any ill feeling or negativity that sometimes arises among coworkers. At first I thought that they may be acting like this because I was new and they wanted to be nice to me, but still every morning Cathy the security guard greets me with a friendly hello at the front and everyone I walk by knows my name and greets me. I'm really impressed by everyone who works here and how well they get along. Jamie and Don, the curator, are particularly close

friends, which I think is convenient considering their positions. It would not be good for the two to not get along causing the curator to want to stay away from collections. It is optimal for the registrar/collections manager to have a good relationship with the curator in order to keep the exhibits top notch. That goes for all employees, really. I have seen employees not get along and negative tensions before and it makes it difficult for things to get accomplished. This is a much better work environment and it adds to the museum running smoothly and employees remaining.

Friday, May 29, 2008

The museum was closed today due to a power outage. When I went in this morning I was immediately told that there was limited power and the museum may not be able to open. Jamie wasn't in today, so I went and talked to Don. He said that this has happened before, although not often, and they probably wouldn't know anything for an hour. I couldn't really do any work and he said that there was no point in me wasting time there since they would probably just end up closing. I called later to see if they knew anything and got a message that the museum was closed, which I suppose means that they were still without power. So today I learned that things are unpredictable. Even with state of the art facilities issues can still arise that can force closure. Interestingly, in all of the facility management reading I've encountered, and that I went back to today, there isn't much about power failure. This would be something that museums should be prepared to deal with, however, since they cannot very well function without power. I did see the facility manager and assistant director talking and working on handling the problem. The security staff was still at work as well and their office still had power. In the end the only option would be to close if there isn't power. I just feel bad for visitors who might have driven up today to find a closed museum.

Monday, June 2, 2008

For the first week or so I spent my time doing data entry. During this process I had to enter “common names” for the various items. This was just a short little description, basically the item boiled down into a short phrase. When I was doing data entry I didn’t really pay much attention to this category. I felt like it was redundant of the description later on. All the same, though, I tried to give a general overview of what the item was. Today I discovered how important this category is. The list that I have while I’m going through the drawers has the object numbers, location, and common name. You can tell that different people put these common names in over time. They range from simply “art” to overly elaborate descriptions. Ideally it should be in between. A portrait of Gerald Ford should be “Portrait- Gerald Ford” not just “portrait,” but also not a long description detailing what he is wearing because that’s not necessary. The reason I’ve learned that it’s important to have this category on the list is that it serves as a check to make sure you have the correct item. After reading so many numbers you can get confused. I thought I had the right item but when I looked at the list it said “map-Alexandria” when the item in my hand was a copy of the Gettysburg Address. I checked the number again and it wasn’t correct. Having that double check of what the item is helps to prevent mix ups so that the Gettysburg Address doesn’t get put down as being a map. That is why it is important that common names be descriptive and accurate. Categories are on the database for a reason and nothing should just be ignored. Also, having checks in place are important to prevent mix-ups.

Tuesday, June 03, 2008

I've discovered that I'm good at finding things that need to be fixed. It's actually kind of annoying, but I suppose it's good in the long run. This started at the archives. I would open a box and find something wrong, like Civil War diaries without folders, or something that had been missing. This "skill" seems to have followed me to the museum. Today I looked at my list of drawers and noticed that there was nothing recorded for two of them. My initial thought was that they must be empty. I checked them to see if this theory held, which it did not. Both drawers had several items. I informed Jamie of this and he checked through and found that none of the items had numbers on them, meaning that they hadn't been accessioned or catalogued. He seemed surprised to be seeing these items and even noted that he had been looking for copies of a couple of the posters that had a portrait of Gerald Ford. He thought that we didn't have any and got some more from the library. Other items were copies of things that I've seen before and that Jamie said did not fit our scope of collections. There were maybe twenty copies each of several posters from various festivals that the museum took part in. Jamie referred to this as preserving your own history, which he doesn't really like. Regardless of if the museum should have any of the posters at all, it should not have twenty copies. The rule of thumb that I've learned is to have two or three of something and de-accession the rest. Space is valuable. Some of these uncatalogued items had even been encapsulated at some point, which is unnecessary and a waste. I de-encapsulated the items and put the Mylar where it could be reused (nothing goes to waste). Then everything without a number had to be removed and put somewhere for Jamie to go through. These items had all been forgotten about because they weren't recorded. If the museum is going to store something it should be recorded so it is known that it's there. That way the next time that a Gerald Ford poster is needed it can be readily located. Items that the museum doesn't need or isn't keeping should be removed and not left to take up valuable space.

This is another advantage of inventories, or just inspecting the contents of drawers every once in awhile, you can find errors and fix them.

Wednesday, June 04, 2008

Today I catalogued a few of Susan (Ford) Bales' dresses that she just donated. This was exciting because they were Susan Ford's dresses that she wore in the White House, but also because I had never worked with textiles before. I also got to see how the accessioning/cataloging process starts from the beginning. I found making the descriptions for the dresses difficult at first until I discovered the visual glossary called *What's What*, edited by Reginald Bragonier, Jr. and David Fisher. This particular glossary is from 1981, so it works well with our collection. It's actually good that it's older because it describes the materials from the time period that most of our collection is from. A newer one would have more up-to-date things that we do not need and the fashions would be different. So I found the dress section which told me what the different parts of the dress were actually called. That way I could talk about the "bodice" instead of the "top part" or the "skirt" and "hem" instead of the bottom part, etc. The book was a valuable resource in helping me with my descriptions and I'm glad that I found it. It's nice for museums to make such resources available to staff and that they know it's there. I know I appreciate it! I still had problems trying to decipher the materials and had to go with the generic "textile." This is something that I think would be valuable to learn, although Jamie said he's not very good at it either. I think that it would add to the description and even help in preservation to know exactly what the material is. I would like to get more experience in textiles because I think that they are a valuable resource to researchers and museums. They are also

popular items. These dresses just came in on Monday and the Hoover Museum has already requested one for an exhibit on presidential children.

Thursday, June 05, 2008

Sewing is not a skill that I thought that I would need for museum collections. Yet this morning Jamie asked me, "So, how are you at sewing?" He wanted me to stitch labels on the gowns that I catalogued yesterday. I've sewn buttons on and fixed small tears in my own clothes, but I wasn't sure how I felt about being allowed to take to a needle to a museum artifact. It's not that stitching is difficult, but I didn't want to ruin anything. Jamie showed me how to do it. He explained that it was best to put the label on the back collar where it is easily visible, but if it's on display it won't be seen. He then added that if there's a tag you can sew it on that. I felt more comfortable sewing onto the tags. I tried to put the label on the same way that Jamie had done but was having trouble, so I asked him if he could show me again, which he did. He said that that's just the way he does it, though, and it's not necessarily the only way. Taking that advice I found a way that worked better for me, while still sticking with the basic principals (not mutilating the object). Although there are some things that should be done a certain way, sometimes it is better to be flexible as long as the job is still done well and works. My labels were still securely on the gowns where they were visible, yet hidden, and didn't cause any permanent damage. That's the important thing. Also, I suppose that I'm going to have to pick up some new skills if I'm going to stay in collections.

Friday, June 06, 2008

This morning I learned about integrated pest management. Like security and maintenance, this service is contracted out. An employee of Rose Pest Solutions comes in once a month with the museum's facilities manager and along with Jamie (because he has to be with unauthorized people in collections) they check to make sure everything is okay. There are stations with traps set up throughout collections. The most important two Jamie pointed out to me were on either side of the large doors that open up for large shipments from the loading dock. Jamie pointed out that this door doesn't seal on the bottom and mice and other pests can get in. Scented sticky traps by the door are meant to attract and trap these pests. Jamie said that he prefers these traps to poison, even though many people put up a fuss about it being inhumane. His reasoning is that with poison the pest still dies, but then you have a dead creature somewhere in collections which attracts more pests really only adding to the problem. You then have to go and hunt the smell down. But with sticky traps you know where the pest is. I never really thought of there being a difference between means of killing pests, but this reasoning made sense. He also explained how we need to clean collections sometime because this also helps reduce infestation. I knew that collections staff generally took care to cleaning storage areas, but I had always thought that it was mostly a security concern. Jamie said that it could be, but he trusts our maintenance. His reasoning was that there are high value items and he doesn't want to make maintenance liable if anything happens. That also made sense. It is best to have fewer people in storage and around artifacts. Pests and cleanliness are both things that collections staff has to be concerned about and stay on top of.

Monday, June 09, 2008

Work has busily begun on getting the next temporary exhibit together, which opens in late July. It still amazes me how much advanced work this takes. Research has already begun on the exhibit which opens in January of 2010. Bettina, the exhibit specialist, has been in Jamie's office in what he calls "informal exhibit meetings." The budget seems to keep climbing, which Don contributes some of to shipping due to increasing gas prices. High gas prices really do seem to affect everything. A big part of Jamie's job besides maintaining the collection is to bring in and oversee loans for temporary exhibits. Today he got a call from a private collector who had some baseballs that he was willing to loan the museum for the exhibit. The man was very excited about the prospect of having part of his collection in a presidential museum. Jamie said that private collectors are a lot of times better to work with than big institutions because they are more willing and excited to share. Some institutions charge rental fees and objects come with strings attached. Private collectors are usually just happy to have their items on display. At the same time I think that there might be more professionalism and certainty that the item is authentic and in good shape when obtained from an institution, but I suppose that would vary from collector to collector.

Tuesday, June 10, 2008

I do not like staples. Today I removed some of the most horribly rusty staples that I've ever seen. It shows what thirty years and exposure to moisture can do to these things. It makes me wonder why people use them, but I suppose most people have not seen what happens to them over time. It is not really something that you think could be harmful. Also they're cheap and readily available. It makes me second guess using them, though. The rustiness from the staples also caused staining to the papers they held together. Rust does not spread, like mold, but it does

cause damage. This is the reason that staples that can rust should be removed. Simple things like this can be caught quickly when items are accessioned to prevent further harm to documents. All it takes is removing rusty staples to know that this is important. I've found the same thing with old tape. Seeing what materials that we use everyday become as they age makes me want to use archival materials all the time.

Wednesday, June 11, 2008

Human error is inevitable. Even if you try to be careful and check everything, mistakes will happen. This was demonstrated by me today. After putting everything back into drawers in their neat little categories, I went down the list to make sure that everything was accounted for and discovered that there were five items missing. The only explanation was that they had been put into a drawer and not checked off. They had to be somewhere. I narrowed it down to what drawers they were probably in and found three of the five almost immediately. Jamie said that five out of 1700 isn't too bad and I will get them tracked down and accounted for. There is only one more left to find tomorrow. Thanks to the collection being almost fully photographed, it should not be too hard since I know what it looks like. It was frustrating finding out that I had missed some, though, because I had tried so hard to get everything written down as I moved it. But mistakes happen, which is why things have to be checked over and over again. If I hadn't gone over my list again then those items might not have been noticed to be missing, and that would have been a bigger problem. Since I discovered the error it can be fixed.

Thursday, June 12, 2008

Jamie was getting updates from his colleagues at the Eisenhower and Hoover museums today about natural disasters in those areas. Apparently tornados have hit close to the Eisenhower and it is flooding near the Hoover. This brought up the issue that our museum is built right next to the Grand River. It's a beautiful setting and it makes for a great location. Visitors often spend time walking around the grounds and down by the river after visiting, making for a nice afternoon outing. Today I noticed that the river had risen above the river walk, however, and is creeping higher and higher. Jamie said that once the water did make it up to the doors of the museum. Location of the museum is an important thing to consider. It seems like sometimes museums get built to suit the visitor more than the materials. The Ford museum is in a scenic location near the heart of downtown Grand Rapids. It's a prime location for visitors to get to with two highway exits nearby. Jamie added that it was not only was it a bad idea to build close to water from a preservation stand-point, but it was also not wise to have collections on the first floor. It seems that collections are usually on the first floor or even basement, though. Perhaps it would be wise to move them up in case of flooding. Of course all items are stored up off of the floor so unless water was up over about six inches things should be fine. Also, precautions have been taken since the water at the doors incident to stop the water. Disaster plans, of course, are important to have, but perhaps more thought should go into such things before the museum is built. Alas, museums are not built by collections staff.

Friday, June 13, 2008

Data standards. The name alone doesn't sound fun. Jamie is on the data standards committee for the National Libraries division of NARA. They are working on making standards for the data entry at the different museums. Jamie got put on the committee because the Ford

Museum had done so well after the last report. The reason for this, however, was that we have a fairly small collection, an internship program, and we only enter what we need. With the new standards there is a lot of redundancy with what is entered and not all of it pertains to our museum. Jamie seems to think that it is over-registering everything. His claim is that for it to all be done more staff would have to be hired because it would take about an hour per object. It would be a chore for us, not to mention the LBJ museum with its 65,000 objects. Jamie maintains that it would be unnecessary. It does seem annoying to have a bureaucracy over you telling you what is best. Each of the twelve presidential museums has different needs and it would seem like they would know how to fill them the best. However, a couple of the museums have been lagging behind so it seems like NARA is tightening up. I think Jamie's biggest complaint is that many of the people making the decisions are not museum professionals. That's federal bureaucracy for you, I suppose.

Monday, June 16, 2008

Today's unofficial lesson was why it's best not to move things in bulk. Things have to be moved in museums for better organization or to make more room. Just today I helped Jamie move books from the vault that didn't need to be there so that there would be room to better organize that area. Doing this meant that each material had to be tracked in its new location. My map case project has this on a grand scale. Each item that was put in a drawer was marked on a list that it went into that drawer. That has proven to be the easy part. The difficult part of this seems to be staying focused. It's not hard, but it's time consuming and a bit tedious. Jamie compared this to archeology where for every hour on the dig there are about three spent in the lab. I think that this will prove true. The dig is the fun part, but the lab work is important or the

dig is useless. Although moves are necessary, bigger moves are obviously done less often because of the amount of time that it takes to change the locations of everything in the database as well as a chance that something can get lost due to a typo while things are being changed. It takes a lot of focus while changing the locations so that these typos don't occur, and that's why I've been double checking.

Tuesday, June 17, 2008

It was an exciting day for the public relations aspect of the museum today. We had our "three millionth visitor." Jamie mentioned in the morning that the museum would have its three millionth visitor that day around 2:30. Don usually photographs such things, but since he was gone that task fell to Jamie. When I asked him how he got this assignment he told me that he is registrar/ loan coordinator/ assistant exhibit coordinator/ intern supervisor/ assistant curator/ assistant photographer. Don, the curator, is the photographer, because he has the equipment. When the director and assistant director deemed that it was time for the three millionth visitor I went out with Jamie as he took pictures. On our way out I heard the director and assistant director talking about what demographic they were looking for, which confirmed to me that this was definitely a marketing stunt and not the actual three millionth visitor. A nice looking family was selected and got a little gift and their picture taken. They also got a behind the scenes tour and got to talk to Susan and Steve Ford on the phone. I got to listen in, which was really cool. Jamie gave them the tour of the collections that he gives special people who come to the museum (speakers, friends of the Fords, and other VIPS). He showed them the highlights, stuff that he knows that visitors will enjoy. They all had a great time. Kristin, the museum's public affairs specialist, was standing there as well as they got their pictures taken. She then told me that the

whole affair began when a kid sent a letter asking how many visitors there had been. She discovered that they hit three million last year, but Jim, the assistant director, thought that this would be good publicity. It's not a complete lie because we have had three million visitors. It's just manipulated a little bit for the publicity sake, because it is important to have this as a museum. She didn't seem real pleased by the seemingly random selection, however. It did make the day of that family though. Later Jamie told me that another director used to pick a family out of the gallery to see temporary exhibits going up. He said that people just eat that kind of thing up. It's the public outreach and doing special things that make a difference. Those people will then have a great experience and tell their friends and families about it, hopefully, bringing more traffic but also a more positive reputation. Also, collections staff can play a role in this P.R. by occasionally giving special tours. This isn't available to all guests, however, because it does interrupt daily activities. Jamie had a lot to get done today, but had to put it on hold for this. There isn't enough time to do that every day.

Wednesday, June 18, 2008

We made a trip to the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library in Ann Arbor today. A fun fact: the Ford library and museum are the only museum/library in the presidential library system to be geographically split. The reason for this, as I suspected but had confirmed today, is that both Grand Rapids and Ann Arbor wanted the site and Ford being the way he was didn't want to upset anyone so he split the difference. The museum and library are only separated geographically, and is actually one institution sharing one director, as we are often reminded. Dealing with this is sometimes inconvenient and can cause difficulties, but things are never easy. So for the most part the library has documents and we have artifacts. If either ends up with the

other a switch is made, meaning that somebody takes a government van on a trip to the other. The library had some artwork that was accessioned at one point, making them artifacts, so they should really be in collections storage, not hanging up on the walls in the offices at the library. Since this discovery was made, we made a trip out there to get these pieces, which the library staff wasn't happy about. I got to help pack up the paintings and a couple of sculptures for the ride back. Each piece was wrapped up in foam like material and taped on the outside of that to prevent movement. They were then carefully moved to the van. I also got a tour, which was really cool. The stacks occupied four floors of boxes and one of books. I had never seen so many gray archival boxes. There were also empty spaces on the shelves for classified materials that were in the vault. The most interesting thing that I saw, though, was what they called the "cold storage," which was set at 40 degrees. This is where they keep audiovisual materials, including videotapes and photographs. I had learned before that different materials really need different temperature in storage, but this is the first time I had seen that in place. I was excited to see the archives part of the institution, but I'm actually glad that I'm at the museum. It seems to be more interesting and fun overall. It is good that I have seen the other part of the institution since it technically completes us.

Thursday, June 19, 2008

Today I got to participate in demolition. The "Tribute Gallery," which was one of the permanent exhibits, is being redone because it does not reflect the fact that the President has died. There is text that refers to him still being active and nowhere does it mention his death. The new gallery will have memorial items from the funeral and other related materials. Before everything started coming down, Jamie and I went up to gather the items that were actually

artifacts. They are all listed in the database as being in that gallery, so this task wasn't too hard. We also took a couple of items that were questionable and which we'll check out to see if they are or not. I got to see how the cases come open and all of the tools used. There are security screwdrivers and security screws instead of your basic Philips and flat head. We then took part in tearing the old exhibit off the walls, along with the Bettina, the exhibit specialist. Jim, the assistant director, even pitched in for a bit. Everyone does a bit of everything. Jim joked that it had come full circle because he had helped put the exhibit up ten years ago. Bettina joked that she wouldn't have secured some of the items so securely if she would have known how difficult it would be to take them down, but at the time she was thinking about wanting them to stay up so that they didn't fall on people. It was quite the experience taking things off the walls. The placards and labels were secured very tightly with heavy duty adhesive and required crowbars to pry them loose. Demolition appears to be yet another skill that I will have to work on mastering because I hurt myself a couple of times. There was a lot more manual labor today than I'm used to in collections, but it is something that has to be expected occasionally. It particularly has to be expected, I learned, if you happen to have very large objects like a piece of the Berlin Wall or an ATM on exhibit that has to come down.

Friday, June 20, 2008

My family came to the museum today and I gave them a tour. Through this I made some observations about visitor behavior. First of all, people really do love the 70's exhibit, which the staff doesn't like and has no personal or valuable artifacts. I think it's the bright colors and music that people like. Another reason might be that many people who grew up in that era, like my stepmother and father, can make connections to the artifacts on display and then tell their

kids stories. My stepmother commented on how she used to have boots like a pair on display. People like history that connects to them or that they can connect to, a point that I originally learned in Public History (History 240). Second, I learned in my museum class (Anthropology 377) that there are three basic types of visitors: exit-oriented, browsers, and readers. The first just look at things quickly, but always move towards an exit; the second browse reading some, but not everything; and the readers read most if not all labels. This appears to hold true. It was impossible to keep everybody together. My sister and I seem to be browsers as we were both in the middle; of course, I've already read it all and can recite most of it. My stepmother and stepsisters were practicing exit oriented behavior as they were way ahead and ended up sitting on a seat, situated there for visitors suffering from museum fatigue, and waited for us to catch up. My dad is a reader. I kept waiting for him and trying to point out highlights, but he really just wanted to read all of the labels and get all the information he could. The readers, we learned, are a minority, however, and most people will just notice things that catch their attention and miss the rest. I'm not sure that the exit-oriented group learned much about Gerald Ford today, but they might not have been interested in a lot of it. Hopefully, they got something out of me trying to tell them things. Third, I learned that people touch things. My twelve year-old stepsister was pointing something out to me on a reproduction photograph and touched it. I quickly said, "Don't touch!" which startled her. People sometimes forget, or maybe are clueless, that they shouldn't touch. The same is true with flash photography, as I had to remind my father that it's not allowed. Museum etiquette is something that needs to be taught better and museum professionals need to be aware that not everybody knows or remembers the appropriate way to behave when they're in a museum. If I had not known my stepsister I probably would have been less abrupt with my response. I explained to her after that it wasn't an actual artifact so she

didn't hurt anything, but it's a good habit not to touch things. The fourth thing that I learned is that people are interested in different things. My stepsister seemed really interested in clothing that the Fords actually wore, taking increased interest in jackets and dresses. She would ask, "Did she actually wear that?" My dad found items of historic significance like the pardon pen and the Lynette "Squeaky" Fromme gun particularly interesting. A variety of objects seems to be the best method for catching most people's attention. Hopefully, if you have a variety something will interest each visitor. I think that I also learned that I don't really want to be a tour guide. It's a bit nerve wracking trying to keep everyone together and halfway interested. I enjoy working with collections more.

Monday, June 23, 2008

Jamie was gone today and he left Eric and me a phone number in case there was an emergency. This got us talking about what would constitute an emergency that we would call him for, and fire came up. We weren't really too concerned about this possibility, but Eric asked if we had a sprinkler system. Jamie had talked about this with me before and I told him, yes, we had sprinklers. This led into a conversation about the gas suppression systems and I went back to do some more reading once I got back to my apartment. Bracken touts the Inergen system and I thought this seemed like the way to go. After rereading the article about it from History 240, they do make it seem safer than other fire suppression systems using gas. An article that Jamie gave us states that fire suppression systems using gas are no longer recommended because of the risk of staff becoming trapped and the damage to the environment. This article was written before the Inergen one, however, which seems to answer those questions. It seems that the sprinkler system would be a better option for the storage area at the museum, and other

museums, as it is larger than the one at the archives. It may take longer than the thirty seconds that the Inergen system gives you to get out of storage. The museum also works with fewer valuable paper documents, and the water damage is less threatening than smoke damage. It seems that it is really up to each institution to weigh the risks and benefits of their fire suppression system and make the best call for their staff, facility, and collection. The gas system seems a bit dangerous to the staff, as well as messy, but it does seem safer for documents. I also read that fire extinguishers should be placed around collections, which should be pointed out to staff and they should be trained in the use of them.

Tuesday, June 24, 2008

A general theme that I have noticed thus far is that while the museum is in general the public side of the presidential museum/library, the collections part of the museum is less public. It is usually just collections staff in our little area and there aren't many visitors. However, there is definitely is a public element to collections through visitor questions, special tours, exhibits, and events. This isn't an everyday occurrence, though. Most days I only see other staff and am not even in public space until I leave to go home. Today was such a day that I spent all day in collections working with the artifacts. The only people that I really interacted with were Don and Eric. Our interaction with the public is brief and often goes unnoticed. It feels as though there is a lot less public involved in collections than there is in other public history careers.

Wednesday, June 25, 2008

Today when Eric and I were doing data entry on a piece of art we found that the paperwork in the file appeared to refer to two different objects. One of the records said that the

object should be a painting that was transferred from the library. The other document was a deed of gift, which wouldn't exist in our files if the library had given it to us, but no object was listed in the space provided for listing objects. I found a donor card from that deed of gift which said the donor had given a book and it should be the number on the file. So I checked the log book to find that there was just the accession number and nothing else. This is an example of why it is good to fill in all fields: it's quite helpful in the future. I brought this to Don's attention, which led to his providing a history of the museum through its registrars. The time that this item was accessioned would have been during what is sometimes known as "Scott's reign of terror." Scott started in 1986 and was registrar for about six years, but they were six years in which much of the collection came to exist. He tended to not include everything and there are several incomplete files and anomalies from his tenure. After Scott there was Ken who was apparently incompetent and fired within a year. Then there was not a registrar for a few years and an exhibit specialist took care of the collection. He never claimed to be a registrar and there are a lot of blank spaces from 1994 and 1995. Don said that he came on as registrar in 1996 and knew that he had a big job because collections was a mess. But he also came in as the core gallery was being completely redone, so he claims after ten years of neglect it continued for another year, which was bad because at the beginning of the next year there was an inspection and items were not all found. Don spent a lot of time trying to figure out when things came into the collection and getting things organized. Jamie came on as registrar in 2003 when Don became curator and it wasn't until recently with a lot of help from interns over the years that they were able to get the collection the way it is now. Apparently Jamie put together a list of anomalies and with interns hunted them down to fix them. He also accessioned a lot of items already in collections storage, explaining why I see so many 2004/2005 items (and very few items from the early 1990's). It

was interesting to learn this history and it really shows the danger of neglecting a collection and how much work it takes to repair this damage. I'm also impressed that both Don and Jamie took on what sounds like such difficult tasks. It took just as long to repair the mistakes of the past registrars as it took those registrars to do the damage. I suppose that I should be prepared to encounter errors and mismanagement by former employees wherever I go and be ready to fix them.

Thursday, June 26, 2008

I went back and read a section on museums at the national level from *Public History: Essays from the Field*, one of the texts for History 240. The article, *In Museums at the National Level: Fighting the Good Fight* by Lonnie G. Bunch III, discussed the challenges that museums are facing with public perception. The part that jumped out at me was a section on interpreting contemporary history (351-352) because not only is it the main thing that the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum does, but it is where my interest is as well. The author argued that it is difficult to interpret contemporary history because it can rub people the wrong way leading to public outcry. This made me think about the core gallery and how events such as Watergate, the pardon, and other controversial actions were handled. The Watergate gallery seems to simply present the facts involved that brought Ford to the presidency. The pardon of Nixon area provides all of Ford's reasons for the pardon as well as documentation showing his struggle with the decision. It also shows both pro and con reactions in the form of letters from individuals. The amnesty granted to the Vietnam War draft resisters is represented by some of the medals that were sent to Ford by veterans in protest. These exhibits present multiple sides, both Ford and his supporters and his critics. I believe that this is how it should be done.

President Ford, however, was the one who had the final say on the exhibit and that was what he wanted. I could see where there could be trouble if a president wanted something covered up or not shown. A good example of this issue would be the Watergate section of the exhibit at the Richard Nixon Presidential Museum before it became federalized. That is where the museum might be confronted by its duty to history to portray things that might be unflattering while risking losing its funding if its supporters object. Presidential museums are perhaps particularly vulnerable when it comes to this. I'm now curious to see how the Clinton Museum has handled some issues, such as the president's impeachment over the Monica Lewinsky affair, and how the future George W. Bush will tackle controversial events of his presidency. One part of the Ford Museum exhibit that I think could be expanded is the Vietnam section. It does mention in the diplomacy exhibit that Saigon fell in 1975 and there's a helicopter on display that had been used to evacuate the embassy, but since I've been here I've seen countless items from Vietnamese refugees with letters attached thanking the president. I realize there isn't room for everything, but I think that it would be interesting to have some of these items on display in that section.

Friday, June 27, 2008

Jamie was called out to the front today because somebody wanted to know about donating something. This man apparently makes wood carvings and has one of the Presidential Seal that he was interested in donating. Jamie had to say no and nicely explain to the man that it didn't meet our scope of collections. The provenance, quite simply, wasn't satisfactory. It wasn't made for or given specifically to the president and had no ties to him. Most of the items in our collections were gifts that were given to Ford or items owned by the family. We have

plenty of Presidential Seals that do have a connection to Ford, so Jamie had to nicely turn him away. There was also a man who had come in earlier and his donation was accepted. He told Jamie that President Ford had been his Commander-in-Chief when he served in the military and that he had this hat that he wore during his time in the service that he wanted to give as a memorial. It's hard to turn away a memorial item and we have space that has been set aside for such items, plus it came with a story, so Jamie accepted the hat as a gift to the museum. The hat was accepted when the seal was not because of its provenance. It was also probably a factor that a hat would take up less storage space than the seal. These are all important questions to be asked before items are accessioned: does it meet the scope of the collection, does it have satisfactory provenance, and is there appropriate space for it?

Monday, June 30, 2008

Jamie had a registrars conference in Washington D.C. last week and spent Friday and today getting everything in collections together after that. The conference was for the registrars of the presidential libraries to go over policies and discuss new databases. I found it interesting to learn that they were not discussing new databases because a new one was needed, but because they've had a contract with the current company for about seven years which apparently the federal government frowns upon. Jamie discussed with me how most of the policy discussion was useless and not much got accomplished on that front. What he felt was useful was getting to talk to the other registrars and learning how they dealt with issues in their collections. This networking aspect of the conference was important. Jamie was able to get to know the registrar at the Bush library, helping to move along the upcoming exhibit that the two museums are working on together. He was also able to give the Nixon registrar tips on how to handle White